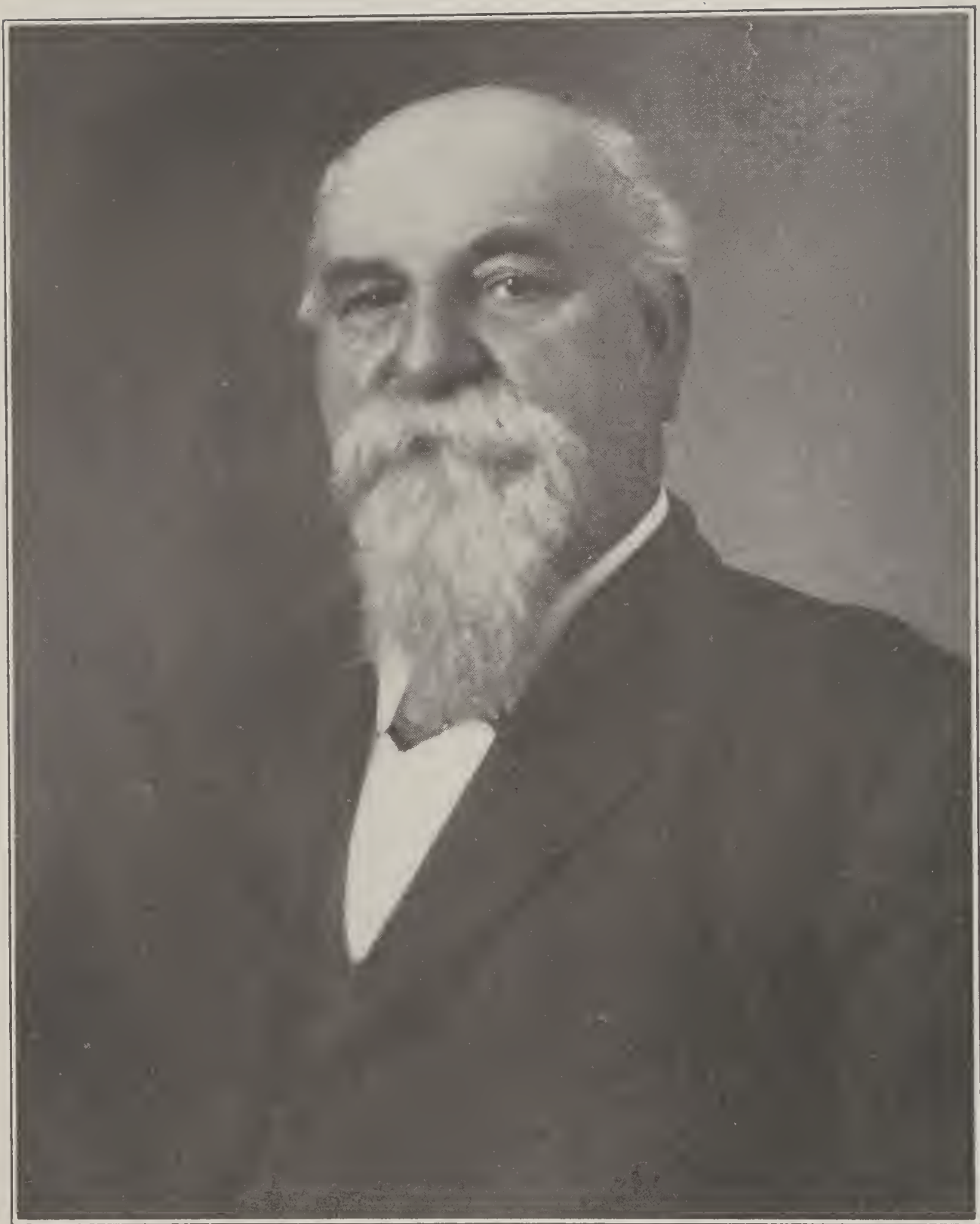


~~E 540~~
~~N3 S55~~

FLS
2015
030164



GEORGE R. SHERMAN,
Captain, Company C, Seventh United States Colored Troops.
Aged 25 years.



GEORGE R. SHERMAN.

Aged 73 years.

THE NEGRO

AS

A SOLDIER.

BY

GEORGE R. SHERMAN,

[Captain Seventh United States Colored Infantry and Brevet-Lieut.-
Colonel United States Volunteers]

PROVIDENCE:

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.

1913.

Copy 2

E540

N3353

SNOW & FARNHAM CO., PRINTERS.

Edw

The Evening

APR 1 1912



PERSONAL NARRATIVES
OF EVENTS IN THE
WAR OF THE REBELLION,
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

SEVENTH SERIES. — No. 7.

PROVIDENCE:
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.
1913.

[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]

THE NEGRO AS A SOLDIER.

BY GEORGE R. SHERMAN,*

[Captain Seventh United States Colored Infantry and Brevet-Lieut.-
Colonel United States Volunteers.]

WHEN we remember that in all the wars of our country, negroes have always shown that they were able and willing to fight, and that patriotism burned brightly in their hearts, though they were usually looked upon and treated as chattels, that at Bunker Hill, standing shoulder to shoulder with the white yeomanry of the colonies, negroes stood firmly, and bore their part bravely; that a Rhode Island regiment of manumitted slaves did valiant service for their state and country in the Revolutionary War; that as early as June 28, 1778, negroes were to be found serving in as many as eighteen brigades under Washington; that at New Orleans, in the war of

*For many of the facts here related I am indebted to a paper by William Elliot Furness, Major of the Eighth Regiment United States Colored Troops, which had been read by him before the Illinois Commandery of the Loyal Legion; and by his permission I have copied copiously therefrom.

1812, Jackson appealed to the patriotism of negro soldiers and was materially aided by them, and that always, from the day when John Paul Jones first hoisted the Stars and Stripes, colored men have served in our navy on equal terms with their white brothers, it is a matter of wonder and amazement that all the military history of negro service was apparently overlooked or ignored at the beginning of the War of the Rebellion, and that our Government was so slow to avail itself, as it might have done much earlier, of the efficient aid of more than a quarter of a million of colored men ready and willing to respond at call. But very few, even of those who had been the most steadfast friends of the down-trodden race, believed that negroes were able to meet their masters on the field of battle; probably because black men had cowered for so many years beneath the blows of their overseers that their spirit was supposed to be crushed out, and a deed of negro heroism, except of passive, suffering endurance, was beyond the faith even of ardent Abolitionists.

Nobody turned back the pages of history and read of the heroism and military success of the blacks of

Hayti, who defeated the heroes of Hohenlinden, the flower of the French army, who won for their leader Toussaint L'Ouverture, a negro slave, the title of "The Black Napoleon," and gained freedom for themselves and independence for their country.* Nor did any one peruse the annals of the far past, which tell how the black contingents of the armies of the Pharaohs fought with courage in no way inferior to that of their lighter skinned companions-in-arms.

No, for our negroes were but the humble servants of masters who were sometimes indulgent, but often cruel, the born slaves of a more fortunate race, and were considered unworthy of recognition in any other capacity. They were supposed to be but little higher in the scale of animated nature than apes or gorillas, and their value was reckoned as one would estimate that of his horse or ox, by the money they would bring on the auction block, or by the utility of the work they could be expected to perform with-

* Of Toussaint L'Ouverture it has been said by Goodwin in his lectures, that the West India Islands, since their first discovery by Columbus, could not boast of a single name which deserved comparison, with this negro chieftain of Hayti.

out compensation from their masters; while north of Mason and Dixon's line they were regarded by many with aversion and often with loathing.

While the people of the North, for a long time seemed to ignore or overlook the possibility of enlisting many thousand efficient recruits from the enslaved race, that race itself appears never to have faltered in its faith that victory for the Union army would bring enfranchisement with it. The negroes knew, as if by intuition, that their fate hung on the success or defeat of the hosts of the North, and they waited in prayerful patience for the expected day of jubilee. Their patience, under the circumstances, redounds to their eternal honor; no treacherous servile uprising, no barbarous slaughter of women and children in the rear of the Confederate forces tarnished the good name of these enslaved men, and their first acts of hostility to their masters and first service to the government of the United States were performed under the flag of the Union, when called upon by the highest authority to take arms in its defence. Not until the muskets of the national government were placed in their hands did they presume to

meet their rebellious masters in war, and then they struck valiant blows and shrank not from any duty which brave Christian soldiers should perform.

During the first year of the war no voice was raised in behalf of the slaves, nor were they allowed any share in the performance of the most pressing duties of the time. Generals issued orders for the return of fugitive slaves to their masters, and prohibited negroes from entering the lines of the armies in the field. Wherever the Union forces moved, slaveholders did not hesitate to reclaim their chattels, and the free soldiers of the North were expected to aid them in so doing. But this service soon began to shock the sense of justice of the soldiers, and here and there commanders would connive at the escape, or would openly protect from recapture the slaves who had thrown themselves upon their mercy; and later, when reverses came, when the battle lists of losses grew longer and longer, when every village throughout the land was in mourning, when the government began to see that the conflict would prove something more than a few months' pastime, and when the country at large commenced to realize the

magnitude of the task it had undertaken to perform, then the project of arming the negroes was seriously thought of and discussed.

For a long time the enlistment of colored men was bitterly opposed by many civil as well as military officers; indeed, it was not until the closing years of the war that the negroes' right to fight for the common country was universally acknowledged, and even the tardy recognition of their services in *conquering* the Confederates and of their soldierly qualities and bravery on the field of battle has been literally wrung from unwilling witnesses.]

Time would fail, to note in detail General Hunter's experiment in organizing negro troops in South Carolina, or that of General Phelps and General Butler in Louisiana, and only a hasty review can be given of a few of the incidents that led up to the employment of the much despised race as soldiers.

In March, 1862, Congress added a new provision to the Articles of War, forbidding officers and soldiers from returning fugitive slaves. In the following June the slaves of those actually engaged in rebellion were declared free, and in July, of the same

year, President Lincoln was authorized to accept negroes for any service. About a month later, the Secretary of War, for the first time, authorized the raising of negro troops, by directing General Rufus Saxton to arm, uniform, equip and receive into the service of the United States such numbers of volunteers of African descent as he might deem expedient, not exceeding five thousand, and to detail officers to instruct and command them. In September, the Union victory at Antietam so strengthened the administration that the President at once issued his preliminary Emancipation, which was to go into effect January 1, 1863; and after that step all logical objection to using the negroes as a military factor ceased.

On January 1, 1863 (now just fifty years ago), President Lincoln issued his final Emancipation Proclamation, and the project of making use of the negroes as soldiers was then considered more favorably; but not until the 22d of May following was the Bureau of Colored Troops established in the War Department. The tide then fully turned, for the government itself undertook the work of recruiting and organizing the new military force.

By the close of the year 1863 fully fifty thousand colored troops had been organized, the number being trebled within a year; and when the end came, there had been enrolled a total of 178,975 of these men in the Union Army. Every northern state east of the Rocky Mountains, except Nebraska, is credited with them, and nearly 100,000 were raised in the states which had seceded.

When the enlistment of colored men was fairly begun, the Confederate Congress passed an Act, the fourth section of which reads as follows:

“That every white person, being a commissioned officer, or acting as such, who, during the present war, shall command negroes or mulattoes in arms against the Confederate States, or who shall arm, train, organize or prepare negroes or mulattoes for military service against the Confederate States, or who shall voluntarily aid negroes or mulattoes in any military enterprise, attack, or conflict in such service, shall be deemed as inciting servile insurrection, and shall, if captured, be put to death, or be otherwise punished at the discretion of the Court.”

Another section provided: “That all negro slaves

captured in arms be at once delivered over to the executive authorities of the respective states to which they belong, to be dealt with according to the laws of said states."

In view of this proclamation of outlawry, and of their knowledge that, if captured, they could not expect the same treatment as white men, the voluntary enlistment of so many slaves gives conclusive evidence of their having far more than ordinary courage and nerve. It shows that they were willing to put themselves in a position of the utmost peril to serve their country in its time of greatest need, and it also demonstrates their unfaltering faith that victory to the North would bring enfranchisement to their race.

The organization of the First Regiment of United States Colored Troops was begun in the District of Columbia, May 19, 1863, and about the same time a Board for the examination of officers of colored troops was appointed in the East, with Major-General Casey as its president, and another for the West, to hold its sessions at Nashville. That the labors of these Boards contributed very materially to the suc-

cess of the experiment of employing this class of soldiers, no one acquainted with the facts can doubt. In almost every instance, I believe, the officers placed in command of colored troops were selected from officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates who had seen active service. No outside influence, whether social, political or military, had any undue weight with the examining board. Every candidate had to stand upon his own merit. In some cases field officers failed to pass as second lieutenants. Of seven hundred and forty candidates examined by General Casey's board, prior to Feb. 2, 1864, three hundred and thirty-three were rejected, two hundred and two were recommended for second lieutenants, one hundred and one for first lieutenants, seventy-two for captains, eighteen for majors, eight for lieutenant-colonels, and only six were found equal to the responsibilities of colonel.

It was the writer's privilege, after two years' service in the Eighty-First Regiment New York Volunteers, to be assigned to the Seventh Regiment United States Colored Troops, with which he served a full three years' term.

In considering the qualifications of negroes for service as soldiers, all authorities admit that they are quick to learn the manual of arms and the evolutions of the army drill. In these they took great pride and pleasure, and when well uniformed their appearance was always good. They endured the hardships of camp and marches with a cheerful patience which was very pleasing to their officers, and it was particularly noticed on many occasions, that their percentage of stragglers on the march was phenomenally small.

Aug. 19, 1864, Major-General David B. Birney, commanding the Tenth Army Corps, in general orders, complimented the colored troops, viz.:

“To the colored regiments, recently added to us and fighting with us, the Major-General tenders his thanks for their uniform good conduct and soldierly bearing. They have set a good example to our veterans by the entire absence of straggling from their ranks on the march.”

Their long service as slaves and servants made them obedient and easily subject to their officers, and very few deserted or became insubordinate. It

has been said that they were not so able to endure the fatigue of a long march as were the white soldiers, but the fact that they straggled less than white soldiers refutes that assertion. From my experience, in further contradiction of that statement, I will add that of my company, after marching thirty miles in Florida on the twenty-fifth day of July, 1864, every man who started with us in the morning was present to answer to his name when we halted at night for bivouac. They endured hunger more patiently than other troops of our army and were found to be as healthy generally.

The enlisted men of my regiment were mostly slaves from the plantations of those counties of Maryland and Virginia which lie east of the Chesapeake Bay. These recruits came to us ignorant of books, without interest in anything outside their own plantation world; they were ignorant of everything except to obey. Very few could read a word, and excepting only a few free born men, scarcely one could write his name. To compensate for these disadvantages, there was at once manifested by them great eagerness to learn their duties, and an interest

in them that could not be excelled. They gave themselves up to the work before them, wholly and without reserve, while the officers of the regiment seemed imbued with an earnest determination and a common ambition to make the regiment second to none. To this end the latter labored unceasingly, not in matters of drill and discipline only, but also to remedy, as far as possible, their almost total lack of education. Classes were organized in each company for the non-commissioned officers, and they would go out among the men to teach them the A, B, C; and except when military duty prevented, these classes were kept up almost to the day of discharge. It was an interesting sight, that might have been witnessed almost every day during the first year, to see groups of five or six men gathered around a primer or spelling book, learning the alphabet, and as time passed on, to see those same men writing letters to their friends, or reading a book or paper.

When the regiment was disbanded, after a full three years' service, nearly all of them could read, a large percentage could write fairly well, and many had acquired considerable knowledge of the elemen-

tary branches, and, what was of even greater importance, all had learned self-reliance and self-respect, and went back to their homes with views enlarged, ambition aroused, and their interest in the outside world thoroughly awakened.

After the regiment was in fair working order, the officers sought to teach their men the value of money and induce them to save their earnings. The success of their efforts in that important direction is attested by the fact that when the regiment was mustered out nearly \$90,000 stood to their credit in savings institutions in Baltimore and Washington.

Not only were the men remarkable for their temperate habits, cases of drunkenness being very rare, but they were quiet and orderly as well, and their freedom from the use of profane and obscene language was remarkable.

For these reasons, it seems the negro soldier must be admitted to be fully equal, in all respects, to soldiers of other races and colors, particularly if it can be shown that he has stood the supreme test of battle by taking and maintaining his position side by side and shoulder to shoulder with his fellow white

soldiers,—facing the same enemy, with the same dogged persistence; storming the same fortifications, with the same undaunted heroism, and resisting the assaults of the common enemy with equal courage and efficiency.

At the battle of Rhode Island, Aug. 29, 1778, according to Arnold, the Rhode Island historian, “the newly raised black regiment of manumitted slaves, commanded by Col. Christopher Greene, justified the highest hopes of its leaders and contributed in no small degree to the favorable result of that sanguinary contest. Posted in a grove in a valley, and headed by their Major, Samuel Ward, they three times drove back the Hessians, who strove desperately and vainly to dislodge them. So bloody was the struggle that, on the day after the battle, the Hessian colonel who had led these repeated charges, applied for a change of command because he dared not lead that regiment again into action, lest they should shoot him for causing so great a loss of life.” You will remember it is stated this was a “newly raised black regiment,” probably they were poorly prepared by drill and discipline for such a desperate contest, but they three times drove back the enemy.

I have seen escaping slaves fresh from Southern plantations come into the Union army as recruits. We have later noticed their soldierly bearing, fidelity, and endurance; we have been with them on the march, in the bivouac, and on picket and fatigue duty, and have observed with deep respect and admiration their unyielding firmness and self-sacrificing valor on the skirmish line and amid the whirlwind shock of battle, while cannon were roaring far and near, in front, to the right and to the left; when great trees were being splintered, broken and crushed as if smitten by the bolts of heaven; when whistling, singing bullets were flying thick about them, and comrades were falling all around us, but I never have seen one of them show the least sign of cowardice.

We once saw a white regiment, its ammunition exhausted, just as the Confederates charged with their famous wild yell, break ranks in confusion and flee in disorder through the Union lines. We saw the Seventh Regiment of United States Colored Troops sent to the relief of the fleeing whites. We saw them advance in perfect order, with the steady-

ness of veterans, without discharging a musket until the order to fire was given, and then they met the rushing charge of the foe as a rock receives and rolls back the surges of the ocean.*

I was with the same regiment on Sept. 29, 1864, when Companies C. D. G and K, were placed under the command of Captain Julius A. Weiss, and ordered to charge and capture a fort in our front. When the order was received the Captain exclaimed, "What, capture a fort with a skirmish line? Who ever heard of such a thing? We'll try, but it can't be done." It proved to be Fort Gilmer, on the main line of Confederate defense, about six and a half miles from Richmond. A white regiment, the Ninth Maine, had just been repulsed in a charge on the same fort.

I had been transferred from Company F the evening before to command Company C, expecting promotion as its Captain. Advancing as skirmishers we soon encountered a heavy fire of shell and shrapnel, not from the fort in our front *alone*, but also

* See also history of Seventh Regiment United States Colored Troops. Page 30.

from one on our right flank, which was quickly followed by canister, and soon supplemented by musketry, the instant it could be utilized. Almost at the same moment the order to charge was given, and we dashed forward, soon to find ourselves plunging into a ditch fully seven feet deep, and twice that width. Pausing only for a breathing spell, the men helped one another up the interior, and nearly perpendicular wall of the ditch, until sixty or more had climbed to the foot of the parapet, and, upon signal, all attempted to scale and storm it. A volley from muskets whose muzzles almost touched us, and whose bullets penetrated the brains or breasts of many of those who showed themselves above the exterior crest, drove them instantly back, tumbling many into the ditch. Hand grenades were also thrown among us, some of which were caught by the men and hurled back at the enemy. The assaulting party was soon rendered perfectly helpless and we were compelled to surrender.

All of the four companies except two lieutenants who skulked and one man who escaped from the ditch, were either killed, wounded or captured. One

man escaped from the ditch and ran back to the regiment unobserved by our captors, during the excitement attending the surrender, and the transfer of our personal effects to the possession of the victors. One of the prisoners was claimed as a slave, and was delivered over to his would-be master.

Of the 150 enlisted men who started, 51, or over 32 per cent, were killed or mortally wounded; a loss exceeding that of any other command in a single engagement, during the entire war.

Oct. 11, 1864, General Butler issued a General Order, in which he complimented the colored soldiers of his command, viz.:

“The colored soldiers, by coolness, steadiness and dash, have silenced every cavil of the doubters of their soldierly capacity, and drawn tokens of admiration from their enemies—have brought their late masters, even, to the consideration of the question whether they will not employ as soldiers the hitherto despised race.”

For further interesting reports of this remarkable assault by colored troops on one of the strongest forts on the defenses of Richmond, the following accounts from both the

Union and Confederate side, are reprinted from *Personal Narratives, No. 7, Fifth Series*.

The report of Capt. Weiss, says :

"Upon receiving the order to charge the fort, I at once, about one o'clock P. M., ordered the four companies, on the right of the regiment, twenty-five or thirty paces to the front where a slight depression in the ground screened them from the eyes, if not the projectiles, of the enemy. After being deployed by the flank on the right of the second company, the command advanced in ordinary quick step against the objective point. Emerging from the swale into view, it became at once the target for a seemingly redoubled fire, not only from the fort in front, but also from the one on its right. The fire of the latter had been reported silenced, but instead, from its position to the right oblique, it proved even more destructive than that of the one in front.

"Both forts were most advantageously situated for defense, at the extremity of a plain, variously estimated at from five hundred to seven hundred yards, the surface of which afforded at no point shelter from view or shot to an assailing party. The forts were connected by a curtain of rifle-pits containing a re-entrant angle, thus providing for a reciprocal enfilading fire in case either was attacked.

"The nature of the ground and the small altitude of the ordnance above the level of the plain, also made the fire in the nature of a ricochet.

"As the party advanced the enemy's shell and shrapnel were exchanged for canister, followed soon by a lively rattle of musketry. When within range of the latter, and after having traversed about three-fourths of the distance, the order to charge was given and obeyed with an alacrity that seemed to make the execution almost precede the order.

For a moment, judging from the slacking of their fire, the enemy seemed to be affected by a panicky astonishment, but soon recovering, they opened again with canister and musketry, which, at the shorter range, tore through the ranks with deadlier effect.

"In a few minutes the ditch of the fort was reached. It was fully seven feet deep and twelve to fourteen wide, the excavated material sufficing for the embankments of the fort. Some one hundred and twenty men and officers precipitated themselves into it, many losing their lives at its very edge. After a short breathing spell men were helped up the exterior slope of the parapet on the shoulders of others, and fifty or sixty being thus disposed an attempt was made to storm the fort. At the signal all rose, but the enemy, lying securely sheltered behind the interior slope, the muzzles of their guns almost touching the storming party, received the latter with a crushing fire, sending many into the ditch below shot through the brain or breast. Several other attempts were made with like results, till at least forty or fifty of the assailants were writhing in the ditch below or resting forever.

"The defense having been obviously reinforced meanwhile from other points not so directly attacked, and having armed the gunners with muskets, it was considered impolitic to attempt another storm with the now greatly reduced force on hand, especially as the cessation of the artillery fire of the fort was considered a sufficient hint to the commander of the Union forces that the attacking party had come to close quarters and were proper subjects for reinforcements. No signs, however, of the latter appearing, it was decided to surrender, especially as the enemy had now commenced to roll lighted short fuse shells among the stormers, against which there was no defense.

"Seven officers and from seventy to eighty enlisted men delivered up their arms to an enemy gallant enough to have fought for a better cause.

A correspondent of the *Richmond Whig* under date of Oct. 6, 1864, gives the following account of what he saw and heard, on his visit to Fort Gilmer a few days after the assault:

"When the writer hereof turns to look upon the traces of the carnage of the 29th ult., standing upon Fort Gilmer's parapet, he looks upon forty odd stark figures that are lying below—the forms of Butler's slain black soldiers. They are shot in the head, the heart, and wherever it is fatal to be struck.

"A sturdy artillery man near by volunteers the information: 'Those fellows fought well, sir. They came up at double-quick, with their guns at right shoulder-shift, and leaped into the ditch. Then they began to assist one another up the parapet, and here,' pointing to the spot, 'many of them were shot down upon the edge. Our men threw hand grenades among them, and these assisted us in killing many. We heard one of them cry in the ditch, "Look out for the hand bombs," and that fellow you see lying there was bending over one of them to pick it up, and throw it back at us, as others had done, when it exploded and blew the top of his head off.'"

The *Southern Historical Society* on page 441, Volume 1, of its publications gives an account of the assault on Fort Gilmer, written by one who says he saw the whole of it:

"Fort Gilmer was on a hill, with quite an extensive flat in front. The Louisiana Guard Artillery on the left, and the Salem Artillery on the right of the fort, occupied re-

doubts so constructed that each had an enfilade fire upon the Yankees as they advanced. The enemy came rather cautiously at first, but finally they came with a rush, our artillery firing shrapnel at first, but they soon began to load with canister, and the way those negroes fell before it was very gratifying to the people on our side of the works. But the Yankees came on until they got to the ditch in front of Fort Gilmer—a dry ditch about ten feet deep and twelve feet wide. Into this ditch a great many of the negroes jumped, and endeavored to climb upon each other's shoulders, but were beaten back by our infantry, and almost all of them killed. One negro who was either drunk or crazy, crawled through a culvert which ran from the inside of the fort into the ditch, and was shot on the inside.

“Thus ended the battle of Fort Gilmer, and there was no more fighting done on this part of the line that day.

“Had our troops given way upon that day, and I think if the Yankees had known how near they were to Richmond we must have been beaten, for there was nothing between us and the city, and instead of being burned by our men as it afterwards was, Richmond must have fallen into the hands of ‘Beast Butler’ and his negroes.”

On another page he says: “The truth is, that upon that same 29th of September, Richmond came nearer being captured, and that too, by negro troops, than it ever did during the whole war, and but for the devotion and bravery of two decimated brigades, consisting of about three hundred men each, the Yankees must have carried everything before them and captured Richmond.”

Of this assault General Benjamin F. Butler, in his autobiography, page 736, says:



FORT GILMER.

4½ miles from Richmond.

Fort Gilmer was the salient point in the line, and its occupation would have caused the evacuation of

the whole line. The men rushed up to the breast-works, in spite of a heavy fire; they found the works were very high, and the ditch very deep, from the bottom to the parapet being fifteen feet. The colored soldiers, undaunted, attempted to assault the parapet, and climbed upon each other's shoulders for the purpose of getting at the enemy, but, after a prolonged struggle and the death of many, they were obliged to surrender; but the manner of the attack more than compensated for the loss, for it was an other demonstration that the negro would fight."

We find on page 134, Rebellion Records, Vol. XLII, Part 1, that the Tenth Army Corps on that occasion consisted of 33 regiments of infantry, 9 batteries of artillery and 2 battalions of cavalry; that the total casualties of the corps that day were 963, while the same page shows that the Seventh United States Colored Infantry lost 235, or over 24 per cent of all the losses of the Tenth Corps. We therefore have a right to claim for a colored regiment the lion's share of,

General R. S. Foster's congratulatory order to the Tenth Army Corps, as given on page 801, Part III, Vol. XLII, "Records of the Rebellion":

“But among the last of those grand carnivals of death, in which you displayed such gallant and unflinching bravery, the assault upon Fort Gilmer on the twenty-ninth of September, when so many of your brave comrades found soldiers’ graves; when, amid the lead and iron hail, you gallantly and bravely, although unsuccessfully, assaulted one of the strongest works on the continent,—’twas there I learned of what material you are composed, and of what gallant deeds you are capable of performing.

All this outspoken attestation of commendation, coming as it does from friend and foe alike, cannot reflect more credit upon the negro as a soldier than the indirect testimony of the Confederate Congress, which passed a bill in December, 1864, for the impressment of slaves into the Confederate army.

When that bill was being debated, General Robert E. Lee said: “Fort Gilmer proved, the other day, that negroes will fight; they raised each other on the parapet to be shot at as they appeared above.”

The *Richmond Examiner*, of Dec. 24, 1864, referring to the bill which had then passed one branch of the Confederate Congress, said that it might very

properly be amended and enlarged in the other branch by placing at the disposal of the military authorities not only 40,000 negroes, but 80,000, or even 100,000, and leaving it to General Lee, at his discretion and according to the exigencies of the service, to use them in any way he might think useful.

While we remember that 36,847 colored soldiers gave up their lives in the struggle for National preservation; when we think of Fort Gilmer, Milliken's Bend, Port Hudson, Nashville, Olustee, the Crater of Petersburg, Fort Wagner, and many other engagements with the Confederates in which they participated, and in all of which they acquitted themselves with credit, as testified to by an almost endless number of official reports published by our government in the "Rebellion Records," and also by a multitude of unwilling witnesses whose prejudices were overcome by numerous instances of almost unexampled gallantry which came within their personal observation, we realize that the evidence is conclusive, that the negro troops recruited and organized by the government to aid in the suppression of the Rebellion were fully as capable as the troops of other races to perform the duties of soldiers.

Gen. B. F. Butler, in his final address to the soldiers of his command, pays this tribute to the colored soldiers:

"In this army you have been treated as soldiers, not as laborers.

"You have shown yourselves worthy of the uniform you wear.

"The best officers of the Union seek to command you.

"Your bravery has won the admiration of those who would be your masters.

"Your patriotism, fidelity and courage have illustrated the best qualities of manhood.

"With the bayonet you have unlocked the iron-barred gates of prejudice, and opened new fields of freedom, liberty, and equality of right to yourselves and to your race."

Ever since the close of the Civil War colored soldiers have formed a part of our regular army. It fell to the lot of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry regiments to prove that negroes could do as well under fire in the Indian wars as they had when fighting for the freedom of their race; they scouted for years against

hostile Indians in Texas, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona, taking a conspicuous part in running to earth Geronimo's and Victoria's bands of Apaches. In the war with Spain, in the battle of Santiago, the four regiments of colored regulars, the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry, won praise from all sides, particularly for their advance on San Juan and Kettle Hills. From the very beginning of the movement of the army after its landing in Cuba, the negro troops were in the front of the fighting, and contributed largely to the successful result. Although they sustained heavy losses, the men fought with the same gallantry they had displayed on the plains, as is attested by the honors awarded. In every company there were instances of personal gallantry. These four regiments of negroes also served with great credit in the Philippines, and the Inspector General of the Army reported in 1902 that "the Twenty-fifth Infantry is the best regiment I have seen in the Philippines;" not the best *colored* regiment, mark you, but the *best* regiment.

I believe every candid person will agree with me, that our colored soldiers have deserved well of the Republic, for as Dunbar, the colored poet, has said:

“When war, in savage triumph,
Spread abroad its funeral pall—
Then you called the colored soldiers,
And they answered to your call.

And like hounds unleashed and eager
For the life blood of the prey,
Sprung they forth and bore them bravely
In the thickest of the fray.

And where’er the fight was hottest,
Where the bullets fastest fell,
There they pressed, unblanched and fearless,
At the very mouth of hell.

And their deeds shall find a record
In the registry of fame;
For their blood has cleansed completely
Every blot of Slavery’s shame.

So all honor and all glory
To those noble sons of Ham,—
The gallant colored soldiers
Who fought for Uncle Sam.”

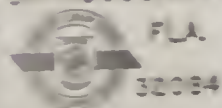
Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2010

Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION

300 North Zeeb Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
(919) 969-8800

DOERS INC.
LIBRARY

FEB 1977
ST. AUGUSTINE



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 703 318 5